

## REMARKS ON MIDDLE TRIASSIC (ANISIAN) SCLERACTINIAN CORALS FROM THE NORTHERN PERI-TETHYAN REALM (CRACOW-SILESIAN REGION, POLAND)

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The occurrence of the oldest Middle Triassic scleractinian corals has been noted only in several locations, in the westernmost part of the Tethys Ocean and its northern, peripheral zone (Peri-Tethys, Central Europe) as well as in the eastern Tethyan branch from China. The oldest, stratigraphically well-documented scleractinian corals, occurring in situ, in shallow-water carbonate rocks are those from southern Poland, from the Muschelkalk of the Cracow-Silesian region (Morycowa, 1988, here the early literature; Bodzioch, 1997; Szulc, 2000). The age of the rocks in which these corals developed, assessed on the basis of conodonts, corresponds to Anisian, namely to the interval from Middle Pelsonian to Early Illyrian. Although the Peri-Tethyan (Germany, Poland), coral faunas are poor in specimens and species (about 20 species) and played a subordinate role as components of the sponge-crinoidal-coral biohermal structures, the recognition and knowledge of the oldest, skeletal Scleractinia is of great importance.

Anisian scleractinian skeletons deriving from the Peri-Tethyan, like these from the West Tethyan province, are poorly preserved, strongly recrystallized. That is why their microstructure and microarchitecture are still insufficiently known. Frequent morphological homeomorphy of coralla may lead to incorrect taxonomic identifications, and thus to erroneous conclusions concerning the comparison of these faunas to coeval and slightly younger ones from particular provinces of the Tethys and Peri-Tethys. The exceptionally well-preserved Anisian coral fauna from East Tethyan - Southern China, may, after more detailed elaboration, provide valuable information on their taxonomy, skeletal microarchitecture and palaeographic relations with faunas from West Tethyan and Peri-Tethyan (European) provinces.

One of the important Anisian coral species is *Pamiroseris silesiaca* (Beyrich) (=former *Thamnastraea Silesiaca* Beyrich), frequently occurring and widely distributed in the Peri-Tethyan subprovince (Germany, Poland), and found also in the Tethyan provinces in Southern China. West Alpine species *Thamnastraea Bolognae* Schauth after Eck and Weissmerl should perhaps also be placed in the synonymy of *Th. silesiaca*. It seems very likely that, due to free communication between the Tethys and Peri-Tethys during Anisian time, palaeogeographic distribution of this taxon was quite wide. However, a re-examination of specimens assigned to *P. silesiaca* is needed to verify whether all of them really belong to this species, as, unfortunately, some of them are not yet satisfactorily documented. As a contribution to research on Anisian Scleractinia the authors present the relatively well-preserved skeletal microarchitecture and microstructure of some Muschelkalk taxa, i.a. *Pamiroseris silesiaca*.

### References

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